Gen. Eisenhower's Address at Columbia

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The text of the Commencement Day address by General Eisenhower at Columbia follows:

When Columbia's first graduating class was awarded its degrees, the pace and tempo of the human world had changed little from the days of the Caesars and Pharaohs. Life then, as viewed from our observation post two hundred years later, had in it more of leisure and less of strain; more of meditation and less of hysteria; more of faith and confidence and less of doubt and fear. But underneath the surface, in the generation of Columbia's founders, there was spreading the spiritual fire of a new social and political philosophy, based upon the concept of equality of right among men, regardless of the accident of birth.

For centuries that fire had glowed so feebly as frequently to disappear almost completely from view; but it persisted sufficiently to provide much of the inspiration for the great trans-Atlantic migration of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Many diverse reasons hardened men and women of Europe to an ocean journey that was then scarcely less than terrifying. Foremost was a fervent hope that they would find in the New World escape from ancient tyrannies imbedded in the Old World's structure.

This purpose expanded and flourished at amazing speed in the American wilderness, where only individual courage, self-confidence and faith could spell survival. It begot in our fathers a determination to reject utterly any political theory that gave one man, or a group of men, an inherent right to dominate others—a determination eloquently expressed and reaffirmed in our most treasured historical documents.

In the simple living of that day the application of this resolve to social and political problems, while difficult, did not involve such complexities and confusions that our forefathers were led to deny the validity of their principles. But, since the days of Columbia's founders, a mighty upsurge in the gathering of knowledge and the development of machines has many times over complicated human relations.

Impact of Modern World

Technologically, we—who are gathered here—and our predecessors of Columbia's first Commencement are separated by the chasm between the ox-cart and the jet engine, between the grist mill and the cyclotron, between a man wresting his own living out of a wilderness farm and the citizen whose livelihood depends on the successful functioning of an entire and complex national economy.

Politically, we have moved from a simple democracy, through a representative democracy, to a democracy that is in fact as well as in name a democracy of the people. Socially, we have moved from a society of relatively few and relatively simple relationships to a society of many and complex relationships.

Spiritually, we have moved from a time when the individual was the center of his own universe to a time when he is a cog in a machine.

Intellectually, we have moved from a time when a man could know all that was worth knowing to a time when he can know only a fraction of what is worth knowing.

Morally, we have moved from a time when the individual was responsible for his own actions to a time when he is responsible for the actions of his government.

Internationally, we have moved from a time when we could live unto ourselves to a time when we must live in the world.

Each of these changes has had its impact upon the individual. Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his government. Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his fellow men.

Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his God.

Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his own conscience.

Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his own self-respect.

Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his own future.

Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his own past.

Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his own present.

Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his own destiny.

Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his own life.

Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his own death.

Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his own immortality.

Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his own eternity.

Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his own infinity.

Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his own nothingness.

Each has had its impact upon the relationship between the individual and his own everything.

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